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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000583

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER  
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY  
PARIS FOR C. NEARY  
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER  
USAID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA FOR HAJJAR, KHANDAGLE AND MARX,  
DCHA/FFP FOR LANDIS, BRAUSE, SKORIC AND PETERSEN,  
AFR/SA FOR POE AND COPSON, AFR/SD FOR ISALROW AND WHELAN  
PRETORIA FOR FFP DISKIN AND OFDA BRYAN  
NAIROBI FOR DCHA/OFDA/ARO FOR RILEY, MYER AND SMITH,  
REDSO/ESA/FFP FOR SENYKORR  
ROME PLEASE PASS TO FODAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/20/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [KHIV](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: FOOD AID PROGRAM JUST IN TIME IN LOWER GWERU

Classified By: POLITICAL OFFICER KIMBERLY JEMSION FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) A  
ND (D).

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Summary  
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1. (U) PolOff attended the official launch of the Consortium for Southern African Famine Emergency (C-SAFE) project by CARE International in Lower Gweru, Midlands province on March 13. Food distributions are occurring just in time, as several people had collapsed in the weeks preceding CARE distributions. In addition, at least 20 people have also died due to AIDS-related illnesses over the last few weeks.

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Lower Gweru Food Just in Time  
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2. (U) PolOff attended the official launch of the Consortium for Southern African Famine Emergency (C-SAFE) project by CARE International in Lower Gweru, Midlands province on March 13. C-SAFE is a regional food assistance program to Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi involving CARE International, World Vision, and Catholic Relief Services. The Zimbabwe program targets 664,746 beneficiaries in seven districts. CARE is working in Gweru and Chirumhanzu in Midlands province and Gutu in Masvingo province.

3. (U) PolOff spoke with a Gweru-based field officer about the situation in Gweru. The field officer, who began working with CARE in January, said this was the first time CARE would be distributing all three commodities--10-kg whole-kernel corn, 1.8 kg beans, and 600 ml vegetable oil--to beneficiaries. This was the third distribution for the ward.

4. (U) The field officer told PolOff that he could see the difference in the community. He said prior to the February distribution, which was actually distributed the week of March 3, people had been fainting and children were not attending school regularly because of hunger. The field officer and Stephen Gwynne-Vaughn, the Assistant Country Director, said they distributed the February rations late because of problems getting commodities across the South African/Zimbabwe border at Beitbridge. Both said they got to Lower Gweru just in time.

5. (U) Crops in the region were in very poor condition. Corn stalks were either dried out or appeared severely stunted. MDC MP for Gweru Rural, Renson Gasela, told PolOff that the people in his constituency would harvest little if anything and will need food assistance until this time next year.

6. (U) The field officer said that, overall, compilation of the beneficiary list went well except that people who lived in growth points were denied access to relief food, as were people with formal sector employment. People living near growth points were classified as living in an urban area and were declared ineligible for food aid. The field officer thought this ridiculous because the people living in the growth points are no better off than their neighbors in the more rural areas. (Note: A growth point is a collection of permanent commercial structures in a rural area. The growth point often includes a grocery store, barbershop/beauty salon, butcher, and a bottle store. People living in and around the growth point may also have piped water and electricity. End note.)

7. (U) The field officer complained to PolOff that even though he and his colleagues helped distribute hundreds of tons of corn, they do not have any corn from which to make sadza, the staple cornmeal mush eaten daily. He said he and his colleagues had complained to CARE about their plight, asking for assistance in procuring corn, but were informed that they were ineligible to receive CARE food. The field

officer also said their long work hours made it difficult for them to shop.

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AIDS Taking Its Toll  
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18. (U) During the drive to the distribution site, PolOff noticed at least a score of new graves in the Gweru cemetery. The field officer mentioned there had been more than 20 deaths over the last two weeks. He thought they were most likely due to AIDS-related illnesses. He commented that the cemeteries could not keep up with demand and that funeral services were on a 30-40 minute schedule to accommodate all mourners.

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Mugabe Capitalizes on C-SAFE Launch  
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19. (U) The official ceremony consisted of skits and songs by the primary and secondary school children and women and of speeches by local government officials (the CARE field officer told PolOff that the District Administrator recently ensured that the government's Grain Marketing Board (GMB) food was reserved for teachers and nurses), headmen, chiefs, CARE representatives, and Governor Msipa. The skits focused on the registration process while the songs thanked CARE and C-SAFE for coming to the community's aid and described how life had been before C-SAFE/CARE. (Note: Governor Msipa translated the skits and songs. End Note.)

110. (U) Governor Msipa,s speech began as an apolitical oratory but then became somewhat political. He began by thanking CARE and C-SAFE for assisting the people of Gweru. He stressed that distribution should be apolitical and that people who receive CARE food should not also receive GMB food. He also urged CARE to address the complaints of the wage earners who were ineligible for aid but could not find food to purchase and to find a solution to the growth point dilemma. CARE's Assistant Country Director Gwynne-Vaughn seemed surprised to hear about this characterization of growth points as urban areas and seemed willing to work on a solution. He also wondered aloud to PolOff whether the ineligibility was due to the people having formal sector employment.

111. (U) Then, as testament to the politician that he is, Msipa told the audience that he had met with President Robert Mugabe and informed him of the plight of the people of Lower Gweru and the launch of the C-SAFE project. Mugabe told Msipa to tell the people that he was working for them and that he suffered with them. Mugabe gave Msipa several bags of fertilizer, which were delivered midway through the ceremony, for the ward.

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Comment  
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112. (C) PolOff was surprised at the ZANU-PF fertilizer donation at, what was to be, an apolitical CARE/C-SAFE launch and food distribution. As far as PolOff could ascertain, none of the other speeches, skits, or songs hinted at a political party, although MDC member, Renson Gasela, who is on trial for treason with Morgan Tsvangirai and Welshman Ncube, represents the district. Gwynne-Vaughn also was surprised by the fertilizer donation, commenting to PolOff that the normally moderate Msipa was a politician after all.

113. (C) Comment Continued: PolOff is not sure if the Gweru beneficiaries were aware of the origin of the food, although the vegetable oil cans were printed with the letters USA. The corn bags were printed with WFP and the beans were from the U.S. During the ceremony, PolOff was introduced with the remark that the U.S. is the largest food aid donor. In his speech, Gwynne-Vaughn also mentioned that the U.S. is the biggest donor to WFP and that USAID sponsors C-SAFE, although it was not clear how many of those in the audience knew of USAID's connection with the U.S. Government. End Comment.  
SULLIVAN